

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-5. (Canceled)

6. (Currently Amended) A steering column apparatus ~~according to claim 2, wherein comprising:~~

a vehicle body-side bracket mounted to a vehicle body member to have a pair of side plate portions opposed each other to be extended in a vertical direction;

a steering column for supporting a steering shaft to be rotatable therein, the steering column being formed with a distance unit expanded by hydroforming plastic working and having a pair of side portions disposed to be clamped between said side plate portions of said body-side bracket to fix a position of said steering column;
and

an adjusting mechanism operable to clamp and release said side portions of said distance unit with respect to said side plate portions of said body-side bracket to permit adjustment of the steering column position,

wherein said steering column is formed with a reinforcement portion for enhancing clamping rigidity of

said distance unit with respect to said side plate portions,

said reinforcement portion couples said side portions of said distance unit together in at least one of an upper part and lower part of said side portions, and

said reinforcement portion includes at least one convex streak or concave streak which couples said side portions.

7. (Currently Amended) A steering column apparatus according to claim 2~~---6~~, wherein said steering column is adjustable at least in one of a tilting direction or a telescopic direction with respect to said body-side bracket.

8-13. (Canceled)

14. (Currently Amended) A steering column apparatus ~~according to claim 13,~~ comprising:

a vehicle body-side bracket mounted to a vehicle body member and having a pair of side plate portions opposed each other;

a steering column having an expanded portion with a pair of side portions disposed to be clamped between said

side plate portions of the body-side bracket to fix a position of said steering column; and

an adjusting mechanism operable to clamp and release said side portions of said expanded portion with respect to said side plate portions of the body-side bracket to permit adjustment of the steering column position,

wherein an upper wall portion of the steering column between said side portions of said expanded portion is formed with a reinforcement portion which enhances a clamping rigidity of said expanded portion with respect to said side plate portions of the body side bracket,

said reinforcement portion includes a convex or concave band on said upper wall portion, and

~~wherein~~ said band couples said side portions of said expanded portion.

15. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said reinforcement portion includes a plurality of said bands.

16. (Canceled)

17. (Currently Amended) A steering column apparatus according to claim 14~~10~~, wherein a further ~~said~~

reinforcement portion is formed on a bottom wall of said expanded portion.

18. (Currently Amended) A steering column apparatus according to ~~claim-10~~ claim 14, wherein said steering column is adjustable at least in one of a tilting direction or a telescopic direction with respect to said body-side bracket.

19-20. (Canceled)

21. (Currently Amended) A steering column apparatus ~~according to claim-19~~, comprising:

a vehicle body-side bracket mounted to a vehicle body member and having a pair of side plate portions opposed each other;

a steering column having an expanded portion with a pair of side portions disposed to be clamped between said side plate portions of the body-side bracket to fix a position of said steering column; and

an adjusting mechanism operable to clamp and release said side portions of said expanded portion with respect to said side plate portions of the body-side bracket to permit adjustment of the steering column position,

wherein an upper wall portion of the steering column between said side portions of said expanded portion is formed with a reinforcement portion which enhances a clamping rigidity of said expanded portion with respect to said side plate portions of the body side bracket,

said upper wall portion of said steering column has an arch-shaped cross-section, and

~~wherein~~ said reinforcement portion extends circumferentially of said upper wall portion.

22. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said reinforcement portion includes a convex or concave band.

23. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to claim 22, wherein said band couples said side portions of said expanded portion.

24. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to claim 23, wherein said reinforcement portion includes a plurality of said bands.

25. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to claim 22, wherein said reinforcement portion includes a plurality of said bands.

26. (Currently Amended) A steering column apparatus according to claim 21~~19~~, wherein a further--said reinforcement portion is formed on a bottom wall of said expanded portion.

27. (Currently Amended) A steering column apparatus according to claim ~~19~~21, wherein said steering column is adjustable at least in one of a tilting direction or a telescopic direction with respect to said body-side bracket.

28. (Currently Amended) A steering column apparatus according to claim ~~19~~21, wherein said cross-section of said upper wall is arcuate.

29. (Currently Amended) A steering column apparatus according to claim ~~19~~21, wherein said expanded portion is formed by hydroforming.

30. (Canceled)

31. (New) A steering column apparatus according to claim 14, wherein said reinforcement band extends along a plane transverse to an axis of said steering column.

32. (New) A steering column apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said reinforcement portion includes a convex or concave formation on said upper wall portion.

33. (New) A steering column apparatus according to claim 17, wherein said further reinforcement portion includes a convex or concave band formed on said bottom wall so as to couple said side portions of said expanded portion.

34. (New) A steering column apparatus according to claim 26, wherein said further reinforcement portion includes a convex or concave band formed on said bottom wall so as to couple said side portions of said expanded portion.